

Venezuelan Attitude on the Cuban Problem: Venezuelan officials' long-standing hatred for the Trujillo regime will probably be much intensified by the attempted assassination of President Betancourt on 24 June. The Venezuelan minister of interior has already blamed Trujillo and followers of the former Venezuelan dictator, Perez Jimenez, for the assassination effort.

Three days prior to the attempt a Venezuelan Foreign Ministry official told Ambassador Sparks that the Trujillo dictatorship problem must be resolved before the Organization of American States (OAS) occupies itself with Cuba and that it would be a serious error to bring the Cuban case before the OAS at this time. The Foreign Ministry official spoke in the presence of the Peruvian chargé, and Ambassador Sparks received the impression that he was voicing Venezuela's official opinion. The Venezuelan official added that President Betancourt had told the Cuban foreign minister that he would be the first to come to Cuba's defense in the event of foreign intervention, although he considers certain Cuban policies erroneous.

Venezuela's continued insistence that Trujillo must be ousted before action is taken against Castro has particular importance, since Betancourt has been one of the strongest Latin American critics of Fidel Castro. Moreover, this Venezuelan position regarding Trujillo is being maintained despite a progressive deterioration in Venezuelan-Cuban relations, a trend accentuated by Cuba's substitution of USSR oil acquisitions for its customary purchase of Venezuelan oil.

Venezuela's firm adherence to its Trujillo-before-Castro position is likely to be influential in such conservatively oriented countries as Colombia, Ecuador, and Peru, which have in recent weeks broken diplomatic relations with the Dominican Republic, partly because of Venezuela's urging.

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